881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits,

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1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] [301] [482] [373] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads